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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Cox et al. :
Application No. 10/630,032 :
Filed: July 30, 2003 :
Attorney Docket No. 31045-19 :
:

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a),¹ filed March 23, 2006, to revive the above-identified application.

On January 26, 2005, the Office mailed a Restriction Requirement, which set a one-month extendable period for reply. In the absence of a timely reply, the application became abandoned on February 27, 2005. The present petition precedes the mailing of a Notice of Abandonment.

In the present petition, applicants' attorney asserted the neither applicants nor their attorneys ever received the Restriction Requirement dated January 26, 2005. Applicants' attorney set forth the law office's procedure for docketing correspondence from the USPTO. Furthermore, the attorney attested to the fact that a search of the file jacket and docket records indicated that the Office communication was not received.

¹ A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by:

(1) The required reply to the outstanding Office action or notice, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 1.114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must include payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof. In an application, abandoned for failure to pay the publication fee, the required reply must include payment of the publication fee.

(2) The petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(l);

(3) A showing to the satisfaction of the Director that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and

(4) Any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(d)).

The Director may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be "unavoidable".² Decisions on reviving abandoned applications on the basis of "unavoidable" delay have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable:

The word 'unavoidable' . . . is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business. It permits them in the exercise of this care to rely upon the ordinary and trustworthy agencies of mail and telegraph, worthy and reliable employees, and such other means and instrumentalities as are usually employed in such important business. If unexpectedly, or through the unforeseen fault or imperfection of these agencies and instrumentalities, there occurs a failure, it may properly be said to be unavoidable, all other conditions of promptness in its rectification being present.³

The showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 133 and 37 CFR 1.137(a).⁴ Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, facsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office.⁵

A review of the record indicates no irregularity in the mailing of the Restriction Requirement. In the absence of any irregularity in the mailing, there is a strong presumption that the Office communication was properly mailed to the address of record. This presumption may be overcome by a showing that the Restriction Requirement was not in fact received. To establish non-receipt of an Office communication, applicant must include a statement from the practitioner stating that the practitioner did not receive the Office communication and attesting to the fact that a search of the file jacket and docket records indicated that the Office communication was not received. A copy of the docket record where the non-received Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed must be attached to and referenced in practitioner's statement.⁶ For example, if a three-month period for reply was set in the non-received Office action, a copy of the docket report

² 35 U.S.C. § 133.

³ In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912)(quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing that the delay was "unavoidable." Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316-17, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1131-32 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

⁴ See MPEP 711(c)(III)(C)(2) for a discussion of the requirements for a showing of unavoidable delay.

⁵ Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

⁶ MPEP § 711.03(c); See Notice entitled "Withdrawing the Holding of Abandonment When Office Actions Are Not Received," 1156 O.G. 53 (November 16, 1993).

showing all replies docketed for a date three months from the mail date of the non-received Office action must be submitted as documentary proof of non-receipt of the Office action. The showing outlined above may not be sufficient if there are circumstances that point to a conclusion that the Office action may have been lost after receipt rather than a conclusion that the Office action was lost in the mail (*e.g.* if the practitioner has a history of not receiving Office actions).

Applicants did not submit a copy of the docket record where the non-received Restriction Requirement would have been entered had it been received and docketed. Accordingly, applicants did not demonstrate that the delay in filing a timely response was unavoidable due to non-receipt of the Restriction Requirement. As applicants have not satisfied the requirements of a grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), the petition is **dismissed**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within **TWO (2) MONTHS** from the mail date of this decision. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." Extensions of time are permitted under 37 CFR 1.136(a).

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Applicants may wish to consider filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive an unintentionally abandoned application instead of filing a renewed petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a).

A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

- (1) The reply required to the outstanding Office action or notice, unless previously filed. In nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In a nonprovisional utility or plant application filed on or after June 8, 1995, and abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may also be met by the filing of a request for continued examination in compliance with § 114. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must include payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance. In an application, abandoned for failure to pay the publication fee, the required reply must include payment of the publication fee.
- (2) The petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m);
- (3) A statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition was unintentional. The Director may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and
- (4) Any terminal disclaimer (and fee set forth in § 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(d).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows and **to the attention of Senior Petitions Attorney Christina Tartera Donnell:**

By mail: Mail Stop Petition
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P.O. Box 1450
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By FAX: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Customer Service Window
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Telephone inquiries related to this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3211.

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